

design and easy to understand. The photographs are clearly reproduced, although sometimes the placement of the pictures is not well harmonized with the relevant text. The bibliography is by itself a useful compendium of the biomedical scientific literature on the health problems of the Inuit. I found very few typographical errors and only a handful of minor factual errors.

This book currently has no peers in its field. No other single work examines the health situation of the Inuit from such a sweeping historical, cultural, or geographical perspective. Since the book is published in Europe, it will not be easily available and thus widely read in North America. This is unfortunate, since it would be of significant value for the orientation of physicians and other health practitioners who are embarking on clinical assignments in the Arctic regions of Alaska and Canada.

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**FROM MIDDLE AGES TO COLONIAL TIMES: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ETHNOHISTORICAL STUDIES OF THE THULE CULTURE IN SOUTH WEST GREENLAND 1300–1800 A.D.** By HANS CHRISTIAN GULLØV. Copenhagen: The Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland, 1997. Meddelelser om Grønland, Man & Society 23. 501 p., maps, drawings, b&w illus., bib., appendix. Hardbound. DKK 500.00 + VAT.

In this ambitious volume, Hans Christian Gulløv presents archaeological and ethnographic data that span the entire culture history of Greenland from the arrival of the Thule people until the middle of the 18th century, by which time their descendants were known simply as Greenlanders. Most of the archaeological data described in detail derive from the 17th and 18th centuries in southwest Greenland, but in his analysis Gulløv also draws heavily on previously published data from throughout Greenland and Arctic Canada.

In the first chapter, Gulløv summarizes what he identifies as the prevailing model of Greenland Thule culture history. Beginning in northwest Greenland, Thule spread around the island in both directions. The expansion along the west coast entered southwest Greenland in the 15th century, following the depopulation of the Norse settlements there, and then advanced northward along the east coast. Another expansion took place eastward, around the north coast of Greenland. The two Thule populations ultimately met in northeast Greenland in the 16th century. Gulløv then cites linguistic and archaeological evidence suggesting that this simple model is inadequate, and that a more complex series of population movements and interactions must be invoked to explain the Thule history of Greenland.

Chapters 2 and 3 summarize the Godthåb District archaeological data that lie at the heart of this research, drawing upon ethnographic sources for comparisons and elucidation. Chapter 2 focuses on the architectural data, with the goal of determining the origin of the most characteristic type of Greenlandic winter structure, the communal house. Chapter 3 presents detailed descriptions of the artifacts from these excavations, including their distribution within houses. These chapters are liberally provided with excavation plans and excellent line drawings of artifacts. Chapter 4, devoted to ethnohistory, draws upon missionaries' accounts, oral histories, and genealogies to document the patterns of travel and trade undertaken by different groups of Greenlanders, as well as the nature of their trade relations with Europeans in the late 17th and 18th centuries.

In the final three chapters of the monograph, Gulløv attempts to reconstruct the culture history of Thule in Greenland on the basis of the information in the preceding chapters and a complex analysis of harpoon head styles in Greenland, Arctic Canada, and Alaska. The use of harpoon heads as cultural markers has a long history in Arctic archaeology, but Gulløv takes a more explicitly theoretical, cognitive approach:

The harpoon head is here seen as a cultural symbol which tells of time and space, a concept in Greenlandic called *piffik*, i.e., a time or place to do something....When I enquire about "the subjective meanings in the minds of people long dead" (Hodder 1986) I am at the same time enquiring about the meaning of the chosen code in the archaeological object. This enquiry is met by an analysis of the semiotic relationship between the primary symbol (e.g., the harpoon head), the object (e.g., the form of the harpoon head) and the interpreter (e.g., the hunter). It is in the last relationship, where the hunter interprets the meaning of the object and thereby uncovers the code, that the contents of the expression *piffik* emerges. It may contain a religious relationship (the connection with the Sea Woman), an aesthetic expression (decoration) or social circumstances (group identity/owner's mark). In my interpretation of the archaeological object I demonstrate either cultural contact or a cultural tradition, for which I find evidence in South West Greenland's ethnohistory. (p. 29)

On the basis of his analysis of harpoon head styles and a very few other kinds of evidence, Gulløv concludes that "parallel traditions" of discrete harpoon head types existed in Greenland prior to the 17th–18th centuries. Subsequently, these discrete types became "diffuse" and were "replaced by hybrids" as a result of "trade, cultural contacts and altered settlement patterns" (p. 474). It is not entirely clear to me whether and to what extent Gulløv sees these "parallel traditions" as distinct cultural entities, or whether they represent powerful, long-lived cultural symbols that co-existed within individual social groups and

were exchanged independently and intact through various processes of diffusion. I believe that both processes underlie his ultimate interpretation, which he illustrates in a series of complex figures that show the distribution of the harpoon head types within Greenland and map at least four paths of these traditions into and around Greenland.

This work is the author's Ph.D. dissertation, and it exhibits some of the strengths and weaknesses characteristic of such documents. One of its real strengths is massive scope; it tries to integrate diverse lines of complex and often confusing evidence into a unified whole. However, this monograph occasionally displays an uneasy blend of theory and description, also characteristic of dissertations. The above quotation concerning harpoon heads, as well as a more lengthy discussion in chapter 6, seem to represent the philosophy behind his interpretation rather than an exposition of the method used to identify the "parallel traditions." Certainly he does not explain how to determine independently which of the several possible "meanings" is responsible for the shape of any given harpoon head type.

On the basis of my own interests and research, I find Gulløv's treatment of two topics unconvincing. Part of his thesis is that one of the "parallel traditions" derived from contact between people of the Thule and Dorset cultures. I have elsewhere argued that the preponderance of evidence, including harpoon head styles and radiocarbon dates, does not provide convincing proof for such culture contact (Park, 1993). There is no need to repeat those arguments here, but I am no longer alone in questioning at least some of the commonly cited evidence for Dorset-Thule contact (Kleivan, 1996).

I am also concerned with Gulløv's reliance on problematic radiocarbon dates, especially since chronology is important to many of his conclusions. Many of the excavations were carried out years ago, and therefore some of the radiocarbon dates reported here were also obtained quite a while ago. However, I am unconvinced that dates run on turf (or "turf containing blubber from slag horizon," p. 88) or on marine materials (including harp seal and guillemot bones, walrus ivory, and baleen) provide any useful chronological information. Rather than listing all the objections to the use of such materials, especially those from migratory sea mammals, I will simply cite Tuck and McGhee's (1983) excellent discussion on the topic. In addition to drawing heavily on such suspect radiocarbon dates, Gulløv elsewhere rejects at least one date run on wood because it "seems too early" (p. 450). He also reinterprets the impressively tight cluster of dates obtained by McCullough (1989) on Ruin Island phase sites. He claims that, rather than reflecting a relatively brief phenomenon in the late 12th or early 13th century, these dates indicate that Ruin Island lasted from the 13th through the 15th century (p. 453).

Despite such criticisms, this volume deserves a place on the shelves of scholars interested in the prehistory and history of Greenland. The excellent illustrations include numerous line drawings of representative artifacts (often with multiple views or profiles). The occasional awkward

sentence makes one aware that this work has been translated from Danish, but overall the writing is clear. One editorial deficiency, however, is the absence of an index in a work of this size and complexity. Several important topics are dealt with in multiple locations within the work, a fact not readily evident in the table of contents.

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FIFTY YEARS OF ARCTIC RESEARCH: ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES FROM GREENLAND TO SIBERIA. Edited by R. GILBERG and H.C. GULLØV. Copenhagen: The National Museum of Denmark, 1997. Ethnographical Series, Vol. 18. Department of Ethnography, The National Museum of Denmark. 344 p., maps, b&w illus., indexes, bib. Softbound. DKK 350.00 + VAT.

*Fifty Years of Arctic Research* presents papers by scholars working across the Arctic, gathered to mark the retirement of Jorgen Meldgaard from a career of more than 50 years in Arctic archaeology. The papers honor both the long tradition of Arctic research in the National Museum of Denmark's Department of Ethnography in general and Meldgaard's remarkable contribution in particular. As is to be expected in such a volume, the papers vary widely in both scope and content, reflecting the broad influence of Meldgaard's long career. Taken together, they depict a discipline that has grown a great deal in 50 years but still presents some fundamental questions for researchers.

Given the inspiration of this volume, it is not surprising that memoirs have a prominent place. The editors'